

similis. ♂ long. tota 17, alæ 9.5, caudæ 4, tarsi 2.7, dig. med. 1.85, unguis .1, rostri a rictu 1.12. ♀ long. tota 15.25, alæ 9, caudæ 4.75, tarsi 2.5, dig. med. 1.6, unguis .92, rostri a rict. 1.1.

Hab. Vaté Island, New Hebrides.

I have, of course, nothing to add to Mr. Layard's spirited account of his first day's "Malou"-shooting in Vaté (Ibis, 1878, p. 276); but I am sure the Editors will forgive my ignoring Mr. Sclater's name *brazieri*, and describing the species under the well-earned appellation of "*layardi*," since there is no proof whatever that this is the bird of Banks's Island, whence the eggs of the supposed "*brazieri*" came. In fact, the probabilities are the other way; for I have eggs from Banks's Island which are very much smaller than those now received from Vaté, and which certainly look as though they belonged to another species. I have now eggs from five islands; and, to judge from them alone, there would appear to be two more species yet to be ascertained.

The collection on which I have reported, though not Mr. Layard's first from New Caledonia, is his first from the Loyalty Islands and New Hebrides; and the list of novelties already described shows how much there must yet remain to reward the energetic and enthusiastic labours of himself and his son.

XVI.—*Note on the Name of the Purple Waterhen of South-western Europe.* By P. L. SCLATER.

BOTH Mr. Dresser in his 'Birds of Europe,' and Mr. Elliot in his recent synopsis of the genus *Porphyrio* ('Stray Feathers,' vol. vii. p. 14), follow Gray's 'Genera of Birds' in employing "*veterum*" as the specific name of the Purple Waterhen of South-western Europe—*Porphyrio hyacinthinus* of Temminck. This, however, as will often be found to be the case when these strivings after an obscure priority are put to the test of a critical examination, is an error.

In the first place, as Prof. Newton has pointed out to me, S. G. Gmelin, to whom this specific name is credited, never intended the term "*veterum*" to be used as a specific

name at all, but merely told his readers that he considered the bird, which he described as being found in "great numbers throughout Persia," to be the "*Porphyrio*" *veterum*, i. e. of ancient writers. Secondly, it seems that there is no evidence whatever of Gmelin's "*Porphyrio*" having been the *P. hyacinthinus*, or of that species ever having been found to occur nearly so far east as Persia. Even in Egypt the ordinary *Porphyrio* is certainly the green-backed *P. madagascariensis* (sive *chloronotus*); and the *P. hyacinthinus* appears to be restricted to Spain and Algeria. In Mesopotamia and the Arabian peninsula the prevalent *Porphyrio* is certainly the Indian *P. pulverulentus*, as there are living in the Zoological Society's Gardens at the present time examples of this species received from Bagdad and from the Hedjaz, or Arabian coast-range of the Red Sea. It is therefore in the highest degree probable that the same species prevails throughout Persia, as we know it does in Sind*; and it may have been this species which Gmelin observed on the Caspian in 1770, and which he identified with the "*Porphyrio*" of ancient writers.

Under these circumstances it would appear that the earliest name that can be employed for the *Porphyrio* of the Spanish peninsula and Algeria is *cæruleus*, under which name it was shortly described by Dominico Vandelli in 1797 in his "Floræ et Faunæ Lusitanicæ Specimen"†, and that the species should stand as *Porphyrio cæruleus* (Vandelli).

XVII.—*On a Collection of Birds from the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, Columbia.* By OSBERT SALVIN and F. DUCANE GODMAN.

AT the commencement of last year Mr. F. Simons undertook to make an expedition for us to explore the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, in Columbia, with the object of making collections in various branches of natural history.

* Cf. Hume, 'Stray Feathers,' iv. p. 20.

† Published in vol. i. of the 'Memorias da Academia Real de Lisboa,' Lisbon, 1797. As to the occurrence of this species in Portugal, cf. A. C. Smith, *Ibis*, 1868, p. 455.